

Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons is a dire threat to the stability of the Middle East, and Iranian President Ahmadinejad's irresponsible (and often anti-Semitic) comments are unacceptable. His speech about "[wiping Israel off the map](#)" was particularly reprehensible. I am also very concerned about reports about Iranian support for terrorist activities in Iraq and elsewhere.

I have cosponsored several resolutions and letters condemning Ahmadinejad's comments, and have supported sanctions against the Iranian government. Even though I am very concerned about Iran's actions, I believe that we must maintain open channels of communications to defuse these threats.

Harsh Rhetoric from the Bush Administration

The Bush Administration's bellicose rhetoric has been counterproductive, leading the Iranian population to increasingly support their government in the face of threats from Vice President Cheney and other administration officials. As Admiral William Fallon, the senior American commander in the region recently remarked, "[This constant drumbeat of war is not helpful](#)"

Undiplomatic rhetoric reached an unacceptable level as one high-ranking Administration official recently told a group of British parliamentarians, "[I hate all Iranians](#)," according to several media reports. A few days ago

[I sent a letter](#)

to the Department of Defense asking for clarification about whether the official did, in fact, make those inflammatory and discriminatory comments.

Nonviolent Resolution

Instead of ratcheting up tempers with harsh rhetoric, we must engage in a calm and determined pursuit of a peaceful resolution through engaged diplomatic efforts with Iran. Our country can not afford another catastrophic foreign policy debacle like we faced in Iraq. I have cosponsored legislation to alert the President that he [can not claim authority to attack Iran](#) using the Congressional authorization for war with Iraq. I did not support authorizing war against Iraq, and I have very serious concerns about engaging in military actions against Iran before every other option has been exhausted.

It is our moral responsibility to creatively examine ways of non-violently addressing these

concerns. [Divestment campaigns](#) can also increase pressure on Iran to change its policies, and I cosponsored a bill empowering states, local governments and educational institutions to divest from companies that sell weapons to the Iranian government or invest in the Iranian energy sector.

Local Residents Opening Channels of Communication

Leaders in our community are spearheading the effort to find solutions to the crisis with Iran. Local residents who are leaders in the pro-Israel community have been engaged in a continuing dialogue with leaders from the Iranian American community to discuss these difficult and emotional issues. I have supported their diligent work in learning from each other's perspectives and developing a consensus about the tough foreign policy choices facing America. Other communities have also led similar efforts, and the consensus that grows out of these kinds of joint meetings plays a large role in my decision-making process.

Just as I have encouraged dialogue within our district, I also plan to continue pushing for sustained US engagement in international diplomacy. As an active member of the Congressional Dialogue Caucus, I will continue working with my colleagues in Congress to strengthen US diplomacy across the world. With an enhanced understanding of alternative perspectives, we can improve our foreign policies to resolve the difficult challenges ahead of us.